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THE MUSICAL TIMES,

And Singing Class Circular.

NOVEMBER 1st, 1848.

NOTICE.

Our present Number is enlarged to *sixteen pages*, so as to give sufficient room for the increasing number of musical announcements, without trenching upon the space allotted to the usual contents of the *MUSICAL TIMES*. These advertisements will be found to give information of new musical works, printed by the principal publishing houses in London and the Country, and it is hoped will tend further to interest the musical public in our paper.

The increase to sixteen pages not only doubles the quantity of printing and paper which the public obtained for *three-halfpence*, but no part of the original eight pages is now occupied by advertisements.

THE LYRIC DRAMA.

(From the *Literary Supplement to the Manchester Times*.)

THE introduction of operatic performances to the public of Manchester, by Mr. Howard Glover, in a style so very far beyond anything we have been accustomed to witness here, appears a suitable occasion for a few words upon a class of art with which this country is only commencing a familiarity, and against which many prejudices are entertained. In Italy opera has been the leading theatrical entertainment for a long series of years,—its pleasures are shared as well by the peasant as the aristocrat,—it is the evening resort, the general topic,—her poets have furnished its libretti,—the highest musical genius of the country is engaged in its composition, painters of acknowledged eminence in its decoration; the noble does not shrink from the office of director, and government lends its patronage and pecuniary aid in its support. Germany has followed in the same track, and reached a still nobler position; France is taking rapid strides in the same direction; and at length the soul of music, that has found household worship in England for so many ages, is beginning to assume another and a loftier form, developing those higher poetical faculties of which she is possessed, as seen in her noble tragedies, and the impassioned language of her numerous writers,—for the musician and the poet are of one brotherhood, and only differ in the mode or form of expression. Germany having excelled Italy in the production of the lyric drama, we may not be surprised to find the land of Shakspeare surpassing the home of Goethe and Schiller, for the inspiration that gave life and beauty to the finest tragedy the world has yet witnessed, and gifted its people with the power of appreciation and enjoyment, will as readily envelope its ideas in this new costume, invest them with this new character, whenever there shall be an earnest call from without. We believe the time is coming, or fast coming.

The oratorio, so long popular in England, partakes to a certain extent of the dramatic form, though its subjects have been principally confined to the sacred; still it is divested of many graceful accessories which tend so much to the perfection of a work where story, and sentiment, and passion are objects of development. But the popularity of the oratorio, the rendering it more familiar of late years through the means of our educational and other institutions, has led the people on in the right direction, has called forth a more vigorous exercise of the ideal faculty; the impassioned recitative, the melody in which sentiment finds an utterance, and the descriptive chorus, have all had their particular influence, affording sketches of pictorial beauty which each listener fills up with his own colouring. We are quite sure that in this musical county the oratorio has been the most important source of musical education, whether we consider it as a practical teacher to the student, or as a refining influence upon the auditor. Undertaken by men of taste and judgment—not as a pecuniary object, but from that innate love of art which so thoroughly imbuces the mind of some few, to the advantage of the many—the performance of the oratorio has been brought to a perfection of which we may be proud. The lyric drama has had greater difficulties to contend with. The directors of our English theatres are generally among the least acquainted with the necessary qualities for such a task. With them it is far from a labour of love;—illiterate, ignorant of the science of music, deficient of taste, and surrounded by those whose interests are opposed to its production, they have made the most absurd blunders in their various musical experiments, generally contriving to drive away the only class of people from whom support might be rationally anticipated. The things they have called operas have been so constructed, and so put upon the stage, as to be totally uninteresting and unintelligible to the general auditor, and thoroughly disgusting to the amateur or connoisseur. Their speculation has failed, and they have consequently been venting their anathemas upon music and musical people, when their own ignorance was alone to blame. But a great change is taking place—these very failures have induced better men to enter the field—music is fast becoming a part of our national recreation—there are larger audiences to work upon—the people have better tastes, and are seeking for more refining amusements—and the man of judgment, perceiving all this, produces that which is in accordance with such feelings, and does not shut the door against those desirous of reaping the advantage by putting the admission fee beyond their limited means. Success is sure to be the result.

But how many are there who laugh at all this; who sneer at opera in its dramatic character, pronouncing it the very embodiment of absurdity; who talk of the folly of men and women, princes and demons, priests and peasants, expressing a passion or sentiment to the accompaniment of an orchestra, “singing like swan” in the agonies of death, or pouring forth the joyous recollections of the past, or the anticipated hope of the future, in a pleasing melody—which afterwards undergoes the process of grinding on every street organ. Certainly at a first glance all this appears tolerably objectionable, to the mere matter-of-fact individual who can find nothing beyond the tangible, the outward, the mere bones and sinews of the glorious things

by which he is surrounded; who sees nothing in the ever varying transformation and beauty of the clouds that soar above his head but a mass of water preparing to descend upon him and his umbrella; who can hear no language in the voice of the winds, no song in the brook which ripples at his feet;—to such the lyric drama must indeed be a blank, or worse. But a visit to a theatre requires something more than the reasoning faculty; we must not argue the question of consistency as we would a problem in Euclid, but give up the spirit, with which all God's creatures have been sanctified, to the freedom of imagination that is waiting with the patience and warmth of heart of a kind handmaiden, and leave her to guide us into the realm of fancy and of beauty. As well might we turn from the Arabian Nights or the Fables of Æsop, because of their impenetrable, intangible mysteries, as quarrel with the opera because its heroes and heroines express their feelings in tone and melody opposed to the common-places of every-day life. We know that the trees, the rocks, the seas, and the rivers of the stage are paint and canvass; but when they make a part of the "Forest of Ardennes," or the "Enchanted Isle" of Shakspeare, for the sake of the poet and the love and veneration we owe him, we take the hand of *Prospero*, or listen to the wit of *Touchstone*, with an earnestness of purpose that transforms all into a reality,—paint and canvass instantly become a truth to us. The opera is a dream or fable; we must have strong faith in it, or we had better stay at home, and leave those who can enjoy and feel to criticise. Like all other tastes, the love of music may be nourished from the smallest germ into large and vigorous life,—the habit of attending to its beauties, and the desire of appreciating them, lead to a conviction of its truth; whilst its effect upon the mind is to elevate and refine, perhaps beyond all other sensuous enjoyment. If you think otherwise, good reader, go into the theatres of the Continent, and see the power of a great singer over the feelings of those crowded audiences; nay, go to your own small but elegant theatre, and mark the potency of many impassioned scenes upon a people who, as yet, are but in the first chapter of what may become to them a noble volume.

Let us not doubt the potency of music when we look upon the actor declaiming under its influence: it is curious, almost a psychological study, to mark the man as he treads the stage before, and during, the strain to which his thoughts shall be wedded. From the dull piece of every-day human flesh, he becomes as graceful as a god, and impassioned,—following the strain of a gifted composer through all his varied passages of tenderness, pathos, dignity, love, hatred, or revenge. Though we never could hold up Braham as a fine actor, yet to witness his small dumpy figure and ungainly strut, expand into dignity and grace under the inspiration of the orchestra, was a sight worthy to remember; and who can have heard him in the concert-room declaiming the "*Deeper, and deeper still*," "*Total Eclipse*," "*Mad Tom*," or "*Luther's Hymn*," and not feel that, in the mingling of sentiment and sound, there is something more "than is dreamt of in your philosophy." It is in moments like these that the heart expands in its sympathies,—stretches out the hand to the weak,—whispers encouragement to the depressed, and applauds the strong; that men grow gentler and better,—determine upon goodness, and build up hopeful resolves. It is in moments like these

that they catch glimpses of pure taste and brilliant fancy, and make for themselves a world of beauty; and the dream becomes a rest and solace after the hard buffets, and anxious cares, and gloomy realities of daily life. It is looking at art with such feelings that we desire to see it encouraged in the midst of a population whose labours, in spite of their noble tendencies, are apt, without recreation, to lower the tone of the mind; and because we are anxious that every attempt should be in a right direction—emanate from the best feelings; not a mockery of art, but a true worship.

SPURIOUS PIANOFORTES.

Public attention cannot be too frequently directed to a fraud which appears to be extensively practised in reference to Pianofortes, and which is daily on the increase. Besides a simulation of the names of the most esteemed manufacturers, a certain number of "Garret" makers, with fictitious names, "plant" pianos with a confederate, who may be a *HATTER, a Cabinet Maker, a Stationer, &c.*, who invite people, by reiterated advertisements, to buy an instrument "*by one of the best makers, and having all the recent improvements*." This matchless bargain is to be sold sometimes "*because its owner is about to quit the country*," sometimes "*in consequence of the sudden widowed condition of its possessor*." Pianofortes, in endless succession, are supplied from the same inexhaustible stock, by "*owners about to quit the country*." This identical fraud has for years continued to be practised in the heart of the Metropolis, as well as throughout the provinces, by the same individuals, and it still alike deceives both persons from the country, and the proverbially wary Londoners. Showy but valueless instruments are also sent from London by the dozen to the provincial towns, exhibited in rooms temporarily hired for the purpose, briskly advertised in the local papers, and of course bought "*cheap*" by the unwary, in the belief that they are the genuine manufacture of the parties whose names are forged or simulated on them. Many indeed have been the victims who have regretted that their eyes ever fell upon the attractively-penned advertisements, or the perhaps more attractive-looking instruments.—*From the City of London Trade Protection Circular.*

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

G. W. will learn every particular by addressing a letter to Thomas Brewer, Esq., Hon. Sec. Sacred Harmonic Society, 6, Exeter Hall.

J. D., Wisbeach, will find the subject he alludes to noticed both in the October and our present number.

AN AMATEUR, Barnstaple, is thanked for the communication, but we are unable to insert it from want of room.

A COUNTRY CORRESPONDENT.—The Conductor in our modern orchestras presides with the full-score before him, and gives the time either by waving his hand or a small stick. The Leader was a name given to the first-violin player before the general introduction of a conductor, because this player was in the habit of giving the time by waving his bow. The modern arrangement is an obvious improvement, since the first-violin part was wanting when the bow was waving, and the first-violin copy contained only a slight indication of what the rest of the orchestra had to play. The presence of the Conductor has therefore superseded the office of Leader, and the first-violin player is now enabled to give complete attention to his own part.